

**Amendments to the Claims:** This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application

**Listing of Claims:**

1. - 13. (Canceled)

14. (New) A catalyst suitable for use in an esterification reaction comprising the reaction product of

- a) a compound of titanium, zirconium or hafnium
- b) a 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid and
- c) a quaternary ammonium compound selected from the group consisting of tetraethylammonium hydroxide and tetramethylammonium hydroxide.

15. (New) A catalyst according to claim 14, wherein the compound of titanium, zirconium or hafnium is a compound of titanium.

16. (New) A catalyst according to claim 14, wherein the compound of titanium, zirconium or hafnium is an alkoxide having the formula  $M(OR)_4$  in which M is titanium, zirconium or hafnium and R is an alkyl group.

17. (New) A catalyst according to claim 14, wherein the compound of titanium, zirconium or hafnium is a condensed alkoxide having the formula  $R^1O[M(OR^1)_2O]_nR^1$  in which  $R^1$  represents an alkyl group, M represents titanium or zirconium and n is less than 20.

18. (New) A catalyst according to claim 14, wherein the catalyst further comprises an alcohol.

19. (New) A catalyst according to claim 18, wherein said alcohol contains at least two hydroxyl groups and comprises a dihydric alcohol selected from 1,2-ethanediol, 1,2-propanediol, 1,3-propanediol, 1,4-butane diol, diethylene glycol or a polyethylene glycol; or a polyhydric alcohol selected from glycerol, trimethylolpropane or pentaerythritol.

20. (New) A catalyst according to claim 14, wherein the 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid is selected from the group consisting of lactic acid, citric acid, malic acid or tartaric acid.

21. (New) A catalyst according to claim 14, wherein the molar ratio of 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid to titanium, zirconium or hafnium in the reaction product is 1 to 4 moles per mole of titanium, zirconium or hafnium.

22. (New) A catalyst according to claim 14, wherein the amount of quaternary ammonium compound present is in the range 0.05 to 4 moles per mole of titanium, zirconium or hafnium.

23. (New) A catalyst according to claim 14, further comprising a compound of zinc.

24. A process for the production of an ester, comprising reacting together an alcohol and at least one carboxylic acid, or an ester thereof, in the presence of a catalyst, said catalyst comprising the reaction product of

- a compound of titanium, zirconium or hafnium
- a 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid and
- a quaternary ammonium compound selected from the group consisting of tetraethylammonium hydroxide and tetramethylammonium hydroxide.

25. (New) A process for the production of a polyester comprising:

- reacting together a polyhydroxy alcohol with at least one multifunctional carboxylic acid or an ester thereof to form a polyhydroxy ester of the multifunctional carboxylic acid
- polycondensing said polyhydroxy ester to form a polyester,

wherein at least one of steps i) and ii) is carried out in the presence of a catalyst, said catalyst comprising the reaction product of

- a compound of titanium, zirconium or hafnium
- a 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid and
- a quaternary ammonium compound selected from the group consisting of tetraethylammonium hydroxide and tetramethylammonium hydroxide.

26. (New) A process for the production of a polyester according to claim 25, comprising the steps of:

- i) reacting together ethylene glycol with terephthalic acid or an ester thereof to form a bishydroxyethyl terephthalate,
- ii) adding to the molten bishydroxyethyl terephthalate a stabiliser comprising a phosphorus-containing compound, a catalyst and a zinc compound, said catalyst comprising the reaction product of
  - a) a compound of titanium, zirconium or hafnium
  - b) a 2-hydroxy carboxylic acid and
  - c) a quaternary ammonium compound selected from the group consisting of tetraethylammonium hydroxide and tetramethylammonium hydroxide

then

- iii) polycondensing said bishydroxyethyl terephthalate to form polyethylene terephthalate.

27. (New) A process according to claim 13, further comprising subjecting said polyethylene terephthalate to solid phase polymerisation.